

PLC Guide: The following is a sample protocol that school-wide or teacher PLC teams might use to reinforce the understanding of the components necessary for mastery if students are to become skilled readers, represented by Scarborough’s Reading Rope. This should take approximately 45-60 minutes. **Focus: Reading, K-2 focus**

Topic for Discussion: Scarborough represented the achievement of fluency in both decoding and language comprehension with a rope image. Skilled reading requires all of these strands, tightly woven together.

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| | Participants will need 8 pipe cleaners and small labels or “sticky note flags” to use as labels. Separate the sticks into two groups: a group of three sticks (decoding strands) and a group of five sticks (language comprehension strands) Have participants put the group of five toward the top of their work space and the group of three near the bottom. |
| Step 1: | <p>1. To build the bottom of the rope, label one stick with by writing the words Phonological Awareness on a label or sticky flag and wrapping it around the stick. Explanation: Phonological Awareness is the awareness of the speech sounds of a language, including sentences, words, syllables, onset-rimes, and phonemes. An onset is the initial consonant combination of a syllable that occurs directly before the vowel and the rime begins at the vowel and continues to the end of the syllable. For example, in the word “tiger”, /t/ is the onset and –iger is the rime. Not to be confused with the word “rhyme”. Phonological awareness includes phonemic awareness.</p> |
| Step 2: | <p>2. Label the next stick “Decoding” by following the same procedure as mentioned above. Explanation: Decoding is the ability to translate words from print to speech. This includes having knowledge of sound-symbol correspondences.</p> |
| Step 3-4: | <p>3. Label the third and final stick “Sight Recognition” Explanation: Sight recognition is the ability to automatically recognize familiar words.</p> <p>4. Have participants braid the lower strands, then wrap a label with the words Word Recognition around this section. As they braid, explain the following points:</p> <p>The bottom three strands must become increasingly automatic so students can become skilled readers. These skills can and should be mastered. When we say automatic, we mean that students have mastered these skills to a level where they do them quickly and accurately, almost without thinking. When students are automatic and word recognition skills, they free their brains to focus energy on the other part of the rope, which is language comprehension. Wrap a label with the words Increasingly Automatic around this section.</p> <p>Once participants have finished braiding, ask them to see if they can tug one of the strands loose. It’s very, very difficult. The reasons these three strands are braided is because all three must be present, and they must work together, for students to become increasingly automatic in their word recognition. For skilled readers, phonological awareness, decoding, and sight recognition are interconnected. If even one of those strands is missing, students won’t be able to become a skilled reader.</p> |

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| Step 5: | <p>5. Using the five sticks from the top group, label one stick with the words Background Knowledge.</p> <p>Explanation: Background knowledge is the knowledge we “bring to the table” as readers. Background knowledge is what students already know about the world around them. Teachers can help students build background knowledge, as well.</p> |
| Step 6: | <p>6. Label another stick, Vocabulary.</p> <p>Explanation: Vocabulary refers to the wide range of words we know, the ability to retrieve the precise definition of a word at the precise time, and the ability to link new words to old knowledge. <u>Vocabulary contributes to 50-60% of reading comprehension.</u></p> |
| Step 7 | <p>7. Label the next stick, Language Structures.</p> <p>Explanation: Language Structures includes syntax and semantics. It is knowing how our language is organized in a sentence, a paragraph, a story, or in a conversation. This strand also includes print concepts.</p> |
| Step 8 | <p>8. Label the next stick, Verbal Reasoning.</p> <p>Explanation: Verbal reasoning refers to use of metaphors, similes, idioms, and the ability to infer. It also refers to students’ ability to verbally express their understanding.</p> |
| Step 9 | <p>9. Finally, ask participants to label the final stick, Literacy Knowledge.</p> <p>Explanation: Literacy Knowledge refers to how a story is constructed; for example, how reading literary text is different from reading informational text. When students have deeper knowledge of the structure of a text, their comprehension improves.</p> |
| Step 10 | <p>10. Have participants twist the top five strands together, labeling the twisted strands with Language Comprehension. As they twist, explain the following points: The top five strands become increasingly strategic. As students get more and more practice and more and more instruction in these areas, they become smarter readers and more strategic in applying these skills. These skills continue to evolve as students become skilled readers. Ask participants to label the twisted strands with a second label, Increasingly Strategic.</p> |
| Step 11 | <p>11. Invite participants to try to pull one of their five strands out. It should be easier to do this with the twisted strands than with the braided strands. This is because students can be proficient in these individual strands, without being dependent on the others. For example, a student can have a tremendous vocabulary, but have difficulty with verbal reasoning. Like word recognition, though, all five strands must be present for students to become skilled readers.</p> |
| Step 12 | <p>12. Ask participants, “How else are a braid and a twist similar or different?”</p> <p>Target Statement: A braid is as tight as it can be and a twist can continue to be tightened. A braid represents mastery; therefore, these skills have to be tight and mastered. A twist represents something that can be tightened; therefore, these skills are evolving as students become skilled readers and beyond. For example, even as adults, we continue to increase Vocabulary and Background Knowledge, or we may be exposed to unique kinds of genres (e.g. historical memoir) that build our literacy knowledge.</p> |
| Step 13 | <p>13. Now ask participants to twist the top strands with the bottom strands to complete Scarborough’s Reading Rope. Where the two groups of strands become tight, wrap a label marked Skilled Reading.</p> |

